Advanced Colloquial Tibetan Language Summer Intensive
Orientation: June 9 Classes: June 14 to August 6, 2021 (eight weeks of classes plus orientation sessions)

The Centre for Buddhist Studies at Rangjung Yeshe Institute is pleased to offer a summer of intensive colloquial Tibetan language training. Instructors in the program are native Tibetan speakers and international faculty from the Centre for Buddhist Studies. Classes are held Mondays through Fridays.

The Academic Program
This summer intensive is offered for advanced students of colloquial Tibetan who are interested in improving both their colloquial and Dharma Tibetan fluency. The course is designed for students who have already completed four semesters, or the equivalent, of formal colloquial Tibetan study, at least one year of Classical Tibetan, and who have a familiarity with Tibetan Buddhist topics and vocabulary. The majority of the course is taught in the Tibetan language.

Building on a solid understanding of colloquial Tibetan grammar and vocabulary, as well as Buddhist vocabulary, the program is designed to expand the students’ facility with more complex sentence structures and more extensive vocabulary, while refining and improving fluency in their spoken language skills. The course will cover increasingly more complex sentence structures and advanced vocabulary, while emphasizing practical language use and application so that students increase the comfort level and fluency of their spoken Tibetan, as well as their facility to discuss Buddhist topics in Tibetan. The course thus combines colloquial vocabulary and grammar with Buddhist topics and vocabulary. It includes a modern Tibetan class, a conversation class with assistant language instructors, a Buddhist philosophy class taught in Tibetan by a Khenpo or a Lopon, and a Dharma conversation class with native speakers who have studied the Dharma.

The level of intensity of the program is high and the students are expected to invest considerable time and effort in order to meet class requirements and academic expectations. That said, any student who successfully completes this course should expect to achieve a high degree of proficiency in speaking about both ordinary and Buddhist topics.

Students who complete the course receive academic credit at the Centre for Buddhist Studies for Colloquial Tibetan V and VI (6 credits total).

This course covers two full semesters of material and therefore earns six credits. Students spend around three hours each day in class, and the expected work time outside of class ranges between two and four hours per day depending on student interest and ability.

Admission Criteria
Students must show documentation of successful completion of four semesters of Colloquial Tibetan, or the equivalent thereof, and two semesters of Classical Tibetan. All applications are subject to approval by the Centre for Buddhist Studies. For more information, please refer to the Eligibility Requirements and Admissions Process for the summer program.

Application
To apply for the course please select the Admission tab, then click on the “Apply to RYI” link. Scroll down to click on the “Apply Now!” button. Then choose the course that you wish to study from the dropdown menu, where you will find general information and an application form for the course.
Course Description

Colloquial Tibetan Master Class
The course introduces students to complex sentence structures and an increasing breadth of colloquial Tibetan vocabulary. It will focus on refining the students’ ability to communicate clearly and correctly in colloquial Tibetan and to augment their understanding of the language by drawing links between colloquial usages and classical grammar. This course further emphasizes the correct and natural use of honorific language. The instructors will teach grammar and vocabulary that will be internalized through practice in the conversation classes with assistant language instructors. Students will be required to memorize vocabulary and sentence structures, as well as doing written homework assignments, and will be quizzed regularly on the material covered in class.

Assistant Language Instructors
Through working one-on-one with Tibetan assistant language instructors, students make practical use of the Tibetan language. The specific vocabulary and grammatical structures introduced in the Master Class will be emphasized in these conversations so that students gain more familiarity and practice with what they learn in that class, as well as becoming more comfortable speaking with native Tibetan speakers.

Buddhist Philosophy
This class is a traditional-style Buddhist philosophy class taught by a Khenpo or Lopon from the monastery. The Khenpo or Lopon will teach in Tibetan from a basic Buddhist philosophy text and will engage the students in question-and-answer regarding the topics taught. This exposes students to the unique blend of colloquial Tibetan grammatical structures and classical Tibetan vocabulary used in the context of oral teachings in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition. The teaching style in this class is more slow-paced than in the traditional monastic setting, to adjust for the language-learning needs of the students, and the Khenpo or Lopon will thus explain difficult words and attempt to ensure that students are following along with the teachings. The text to be taught this year by the monastic professor is A Brilliant Sun: Stages of Practice of the Bodhicaryavatara by Patrul Rinpoche. There will be weekly vocabulary quizzes, as well as a mid-term and a final exam to be written in Tibetan, administered and graded by the Khenpo or Lopon.

Dharma Conversation
In this class, students will work with Tibetans trained in the Dharma to discuss the material that has been covered in the Buddhist philosophy class. This allows students to gain more facility and comfort while discussing Buddhist topics in Tibetan. Students speak about Buddhism in Tibetan, and so learn to be active participants in the language, not just passive listeners to the Khenpo or Lopon and other Buddhist teachers.

Studying Online
To take part in the course you will need to have access to a PC, Mac or Linux computer that is capable of running Microsoft Teams, which you can download free of charge here: https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/microsoft-365/microsoft-teams/download-app
Classes will be delivered through a blend of recorded and live sessions, while the Assistant Language Instructor and Dharma Conversation classes will be live sessions.

Course Materials
The colloquial Tibetan class will include materials compiled from various sources by the instructor. The course assumes knowledge equivalent to that taught in Vols 1–4 of the Colloquial Tibetan Textbook, bod skad slob deb, by Franziska Oertle.